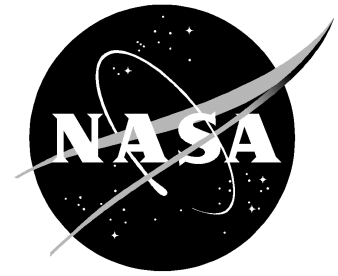


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ODU "WOMENGINEERS" DAY MARCH 9

NASA "Paradocs" to participate in ODU event

They do almost everything together: live together, work at the same place, pursue the exact same degrees ... Bachelors, Masters and PhDs ... simultaneously at the same schools. Even their license plate celebrates their similarities ... it's PARADOCS.

But Celeste and Christine Belcastro are unique. They are identical twin, female engineers who work at NASA's Langley Research Center in Hampton.

Although both have doctorates in electrical engineering and do research to make planes safer, the Hampton natives have their specialties. Celeste concentrates on flight electronics technology, while Christine focuses on flight dynamics, guidance and control.

They have always had an interest in aerospace, but didn't believe they would be where they are today. "When we were 13 in 1969 and watching the moon landing on TV, we were totally in awe," said Christine. "We even got our dad's camera and took pictures off the television screen, but it never occurred to us back then ... we never imagined ... that we would grow up and work for NASA."

The Belcastros hope to convince other young women that they can also go into engineering and some day make a difference in what is still a male dominated field. That's one of the reasons they agreed to participate in Womengineers Day, March 9, at Old Dominion University (ODU).

"We're often the only women in meetings," said Celeste. "But I feel like if you're capable you're accepted. I think there are a lot of opportunities here at NASA if you're willing to go after them. I haven't found any gender bias in the opportunities offered."

- more -

Christine agrees but adds, "I think there still is channeling in elementary and secondary schools ... stereotyping people. Girls are still programmed to identify more with make-up and other things, than engineering and science."

The NASA engineers are also happy to return to their alma mater. ODU is where they got their Bachelors and Masters degrees in electrical engineering, but not where they expected to end up.

"I stumbled onto the engineering thing," said Christine. "After graduating from Hampton High, Celeste and I were going to be in a band. It took us about a half a year to figure out that wasn't a good plan. I talked to a community college engineering professor about possibly becoming a technician. He looked at our high school transcripts, which had lots of academics, including analytical geometry and trigonometry. He said I should be looking at being an engineer."

Christine worked to interest Celeste in the idea. She was thinking of following in their father's footsteps and going into a medical field. "We checked into pharmacy, but we always played electric instruments with amplifiers and were always interested in electronics," said Celeste.

Pharmacy's loss was aviation's gain. The Belcastros came to NASA Langley the month after receiving their Bachelors' degrees in 1980, They worked on their Masters' while holding down full-time jobs, then went away to do the course work on their doctorates with the help of a NASA education program. Both engineers are well-known in their fields, having published a number of papers and served on technical panels.

They still spend most of their time together. When not at work at NASA Langley the Belcastros play golf and guitar and participate in their church.

For more information about ODU Womengineers Day please check the Internet at <http://www.odu.edu/engr/womengineers/> or call ODU Director of Media Relations Jennifer Mullen at (757) 683-3580.